

# **Needs Assessment Survey Report**

*November 2005*

MASSACHUSETTS  
OFFICE FOR VICTIM  
A S S I S T A N C E



VICTIM & WITNESS  
ASSISTANCE BOARD

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## *Executive Summary*

In the autumn of 2005, the Massachusetts Office for Victim Assistance (MOVA) embarked on a needs assessment process designed to obtain an accurate understanding of the current needs experienced by victims and victim service providers throughout the Commonwealth. The Needs Assessment preceded and informed the FY2007 open bid for the Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) Federal grant. The Needs Assessment was carried out through two related surveys: one designed for victims and one designed for victim service providers. Both surveys were posted on Comm-Pass, the Commonwealth's procurement access and solicitation system; and notification of their availability was provided to organizations through the Governor's Commission on Sexual and Domestic Violence (GCSDV) and VOCA listservs. A total of 100 surveys were received: 48 from victims or significant others and 52 from victim service providers.

### *Victim Service Providers*

The providers who responded provide services to victims throughout the state. A variety of services were represented, with the majority of respondents providing domestic violence services to women and children. Other examples of services represented included services to both child and adult victims of sexual and physical assault, homicide bereavement services, and services for victims of drunk driving. Respondents confirmed that the four areas of priority addressed in the current VOCA funding cycle—Advocacy Services for Victims with Multiple Needs, Comprehensive Services to Child and Teen Victims, Services to Victims with Disabilities, and Victims with Limited or No Access to Services—are still significant areas of need for victims. Some of the needs for victim services identified by victim service providers included multi-lingual or culturally relevant services; transportation of victims to court, shelter, and other appointments; and general public awareness of services/access to services. Respondents reported that the primary needs identified by victims included: relocation expenses, legal aid, affordable housing, drug and alcohol treatment, mental health treatment, services for children and adolescents, services for victims of trafficking, services for male victims, services for non-offending family members, and services for immigrants and refugees.

Agencies reported an increase in the use of their services and, in many cases, identified a resulting strain in resources based on the increased demand. In addition to the effect that this increased demand had on clients (i.e. waiting lists and lack of service provision), the respondents reported agency-based financial obstacles that have resulted from this increased demand (i.e. underpaid staff members, lack of money for staff-related costs, increased administrative costs, lack of money to cover increased need for service provision). Respondents identified emerging trends that may affect victim service provision in the future, including: trafficking, prostitution, language barriers, the simultaneous need for treatment of substance abuse and symptoms of mental illness, a lack of response from some law enforcement agencies, and increased need for services for male victims of violence and immigrant/refugee populations.

Many respondents identified VOCA funding as providing necessary support for their service provision to victims of crime. Although many respondents identified their organizations as engaging in successful collaborative efforts with other organizations and effective outreach to client populations, respondents identified these areas as continued areas of need that could be further strengthened with support from MOVA.

## *Victims*

The victims who participated in the Needs Assessment represented diverse backgrounds, including differences in gender, age, race/ethnicity, sexual orientation, and geographical location. Although their experiences of crime were also diverse, the majority of respondents were victims of domestic violence. Other highly reported incidents of crime included homicide, physical assault, and sexual assault. The majority of crimes occurred to respondents or their children, with extended family members comprising the remainder of those affected by the reported crime. Most respondents sought help following an experience of crime either “immediately” or “within one to six days”; however, some waited “more than a year” before seeking help. Although some crimes had occurred as recently as within the last month, the majority of crimes took place more than two years ago. The crimes took place in 10 of the 14 counties in Massachusetts, with a remaining four crimes occurring in other states and one occurring in Puerto Rico.

Respondents reported utilizing a variety of services following their experience of crime. Among the services utilized, respondents reported that the most frequently accessed were mental health agencies, District Attorneys/Victim Witness Advocates, law enforcement/criminal justice organizations and domestic violence service providers. Following a crime, victims reported utilizing a variety of services, with “therapy” and “crisis counseling” being cited as the most utilized. The majority of respondents reported that agencies collaborated effectively in meeting their needs. The overwhelming majority of participants reported being helped by the services received, with some respondents reporting increased independence, realizing they were not alone, and feeling understood as particular benefits of the services they received. One respondent affirmed the effectiveness of the services they received by saying, “If these services were not in effect, my family and I would not be here today.”

Although the majority of respondents reported the services they received as being “convenient” or “very convenient,” many reported having needs that were not met by the services received. For example, several gay men responding to the survey reported that it was difficult to access services, particularly in relation to domestic violence shelter. Other reported needs mirrored the needs identified by victim service providers, namely: bi-lingual services, financial assistance, legal assistance, programs for children and adolescents, more “user-friendly” police intervention, and transportation.

## *Conclusion*

The results from both surveys confirm that a large volume of much-needed victim service provision is taking place throughout the Commonwealth. However, despite the extensive work and creative solutions employed by service providers, victims are still experiencing a variety of unmet needs. One of the challenges facing the victim sector is the increasing number and variety of victims seeking services, placing stress on the resources of an already-stretched sector. However, victims’ responses to the surveys also confirm the value of victim service provision. It is of vital importance that MOVA and victim service providers continue to work together to address challenges and to expand essential services to victims throughout the Commonwealth.

## **Process**

Every three years, new grant funding from the Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) federal grant is made available through an open bid process. Because VOCA funds are designed to make available financial support to community-based agencies and state agencies providing services to victims of crime, it is essential to understand the current needs of victims and victim service providers throughout the Commonwealth. In preparation for the FY2007 VOCA open bid, the Massachusetts Office for Victim Assistance (MOVA) instituted a needs assessment process by using surveys targeting both victims and victim service providers.

The respective surveys were posted on Comm-Pass on October 3, 2005. Organizations were alerted to the posting via e-mail through the Governor's Commission on Sexual and Domestic Violence (GCSDV) and VOCA listservs. Respondents were asked to return the completed surveys by fax, post, or e-mail to MOVA by October 17, 2005. Due to the fact that a large quantity of surveys was received after the deadline, surveys continued to be processed until October 25, 2005. A total of 100 surveys have been included in this study: 48 from victims or significant others and 52 from victim service providers. Surveys received after the final deadline have been filed for future consideration, but are not included in these results. All respondents who indicated a desire to speak with a MOVA staff member about their survey response were contacted by phone within two weeks of the receipt of their survey.

Although the methodology used in the needs assessment process produced a large volume of valuable information, the use of surveys created several inherent limitations for this study. As the demographic breakdowns of the respondents show, the respondents to both the victim and victim service provider surveys represent a diverse cross-section of Massachusetts' society. However, the respondents comprise a small fraction of the victims and victim service providers throughout the Commonwealth. Therefore, the findings from the survey must be interpreted in light of the fact that they can not necessarily be generalized to reflect the realities of all victims and victim service providers throughout the State. An additional limitation of the surveys was that they were available only on Comm-Pass, so access to the surveys was limited to people who had access to computers, or were provided the survey by someone else who had such access. It is important to note that, because some of the respondents did not complete portions of the surveys, the data generated from the surveys has been analyzed and quantified on a question-by-question basis. Therefore, any percentages listed in this report have been calculated based on the number of respondents to each question rather than the overall number of respondents.

The response from those who participated was enthusiastic, and almost 90 pages of data have been gathered and recorded from the surveys. While by no means inclusive of all the information gathered, this report has been designed to provide the most salient findings from the Needs Assessment. Copies of this report are available on Comm-Pass, as are copies of the victim service provider and victim surveys used for this report.

In addition, MOVA, along with the Department of Public Health, the Executive Office of Public Safety, and the Department of Transitional Assistance, has collaborated with the Department of Social Services (DSS) regarding their Listening and Learning Tour that took place over the last year. The purpose of the tour was to assess the current services and gather information about local community needs related to domestic violence and sexual assault. Over 1,000 people offered input to this process which included program observations, focus groups, surveys of recipients of WIC, and two day-long Reflection and Planning Days. A significant amount of data was collected and summarized from this extended process. The reports are available for review at [www.Comm-pass.com](http://www.Comm-pass.com), under "DSS Domestic Violence Services RFI," document

number DSS05-9-02 DV RFI. In light of the quality and quantity of information gathered through the Listening and Learning Tour, an brief analysis of information from that process and from the MOVA surveys has been undertaken to determine areas of commonality. That analysis can be found in Section V of this report.

***Note:*** The opinions outlined in this report are not necessarily those of the Victim and Witness Assistance Board, MOVA, or MOVA Staff.

## Provider Responses

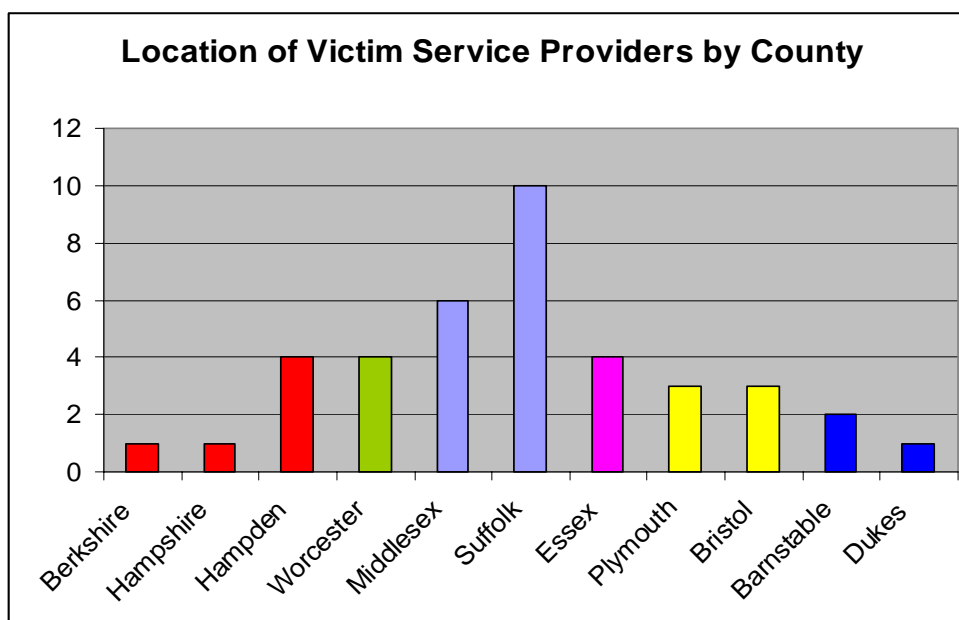
### Findings

#### *Section 1: Agency/Service Specifications*

Of the 52 responses from providers, four were from non-VOCA funded organizations and the remainder was from organizations receiving VOCA funding. A specific breakdown of respondent demographics can be found in the following graphs. Overall findings indicate that the majority of the 39 organizations that identified themselves in their survey responses were located in Eastern Massachusetts, with the largest concentration of responses coming from Suffolk and Middlesex Counties (see Table 1.1). In regard to service provision, the spread was much broader. Respondents indicated that they provided specific victim services provision which occurred in all counties but Nantucket, with seven providers offering state-wide services.

A broad range of organizations were represented in the respondent group, with “Domestic Violence Shelter/Providers” and “Health Services/Hospital/Community Clinic” comprising the largest groups of providers (See Table 1.2). Services offered by these organizations ranged from general victims services to more specific services such as counseling and advocacy for GLBT violence and assault and services to victims with disabilities. “Domestic Violence,” “Child Witness to Domestic Violence,” and “Child Physical/Sexual Assault” were the three types of crime identified for which services were most frequently provided by these responders (See Table 1.3). “Stalking” and “Human Trafficking” were the most frequently cited crimes addressed in the “Other” category that necessitated service provision. A variety of specialized services were offered by the respondents including relocation services, legal services, and children’s advocacy. The specialized services identified most frequently were “Multicultural/Multilingual Services” (29%), “Hospital-Based Services” (20%), and “Community Crisis Response” (18%).

**Table 1.1**



The graph is broken down into specific regions which are indicated by color respectively: Red=Western, Green=Central, Purple=Eastern, Pink=North Shore, Yellow=South Shore, and Blue=Cape Islands). None of the agencies who identified themselves were located in Franklin, Norfolk, or Nantucket Counties.

**Table 1.2****Types of Service Providers**

Behavioral Health Provider	1	2%
Legal Services	1	2%
Mental Health Agency	7	11%
Children's Advocacy Center	9	14%
Rape Crisis Center	5	8%
Health Services/Hospital/Community Health Center	12	18%
Faith Based-Organization	3	5%
District Attorney's Office	1	2%
Domestic Violence Shelter/Provider	23	36%
Law Enforcement/Criminal Justice Agency	1	2%
University/College	0	0%
Other	0	0%

**Table 1.3****Types of Services Accessed**

General Victim Services	16	7%
Adolescent Victims of Violence	21	9%
Child Physical/Sexual Assault	25	11%
Child Witness to Domestic Violence	28	12%
DUI Victim Services	6	3%
Domestic Violence	39	15%
Elder Abuse	11	5%
GLBT Violence/Assault	10	4%
Hate Crimes (racial, sectarian, homophobic attack)	6	3%
Political Trauma Refugee Victims	8	3%
Sexual Assault	24	10%
Survivors of Homicide	12	5%
Victims with Disabilities	12	5%
Adult Survivor of Sexual Assault/Abuse	19	8%

\* Unless otherwise noted, all percentages have been calculated based on the number of respondents for each question/section of the survey, not total number of survey respondents.



## ***Section 2: Service Delivery Needs***

A range of questions designed to assess the main service delivery needs for organizations participating in the survey yielded specific results.

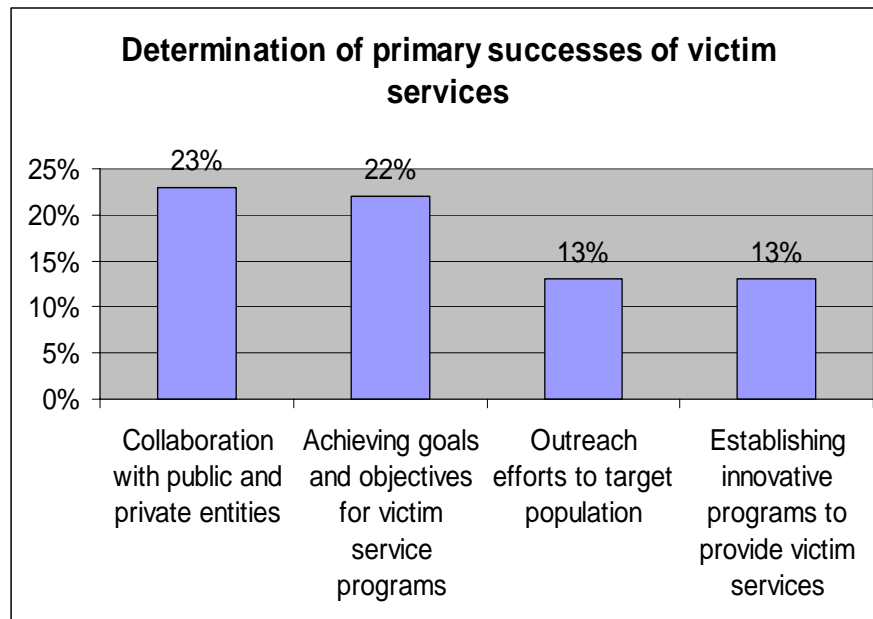
- **Multi-lingual or culturally relevant services**
  - Haitian, Portuguese, Cape Verdean, and general Spanish-speaking services were cited as the most needed linguistic services.
  - Spanish-speaking counselors were cited as an area of high need.
- **Transportation of victims to court, shelter, and other appointments**
  - Lack of public transportation, particularly in rural areas, was cited as a major factor in limiting access to service provision
  - Organizations have addressed the problem of transportation in a variety of creative ways, but are still falling short of needed transportation options for clients.
- **General public awareness of services/access to services**
  - Organizations cited this as an area of on-going need.
  - One respondent very succinctly explained the need by saying, “If communities are not aware of the services then they are not able to take advantage of them.”

Relocation expenses, drug and alcohol treatment programs, childcare, and Victim Witness Advocates for Western Massachusetts were amongst the other services listed as needed.

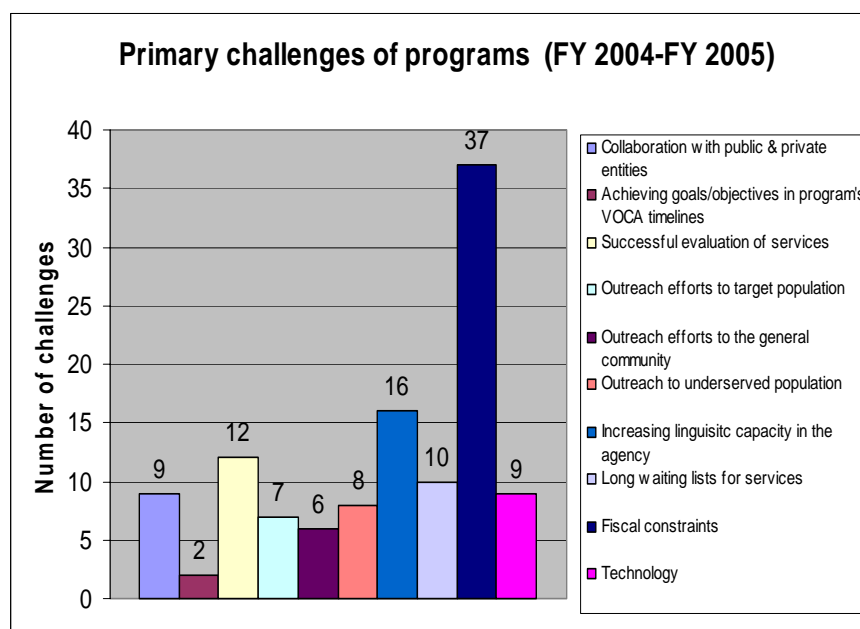
Respondents provided a variety of information about various factors impacting their service provision. Tables providing breakdowns of these findings are provided below. Generally, organizations reported that over the last three years they have seen a change regarding the services being requested by victims from their agencies, with counseling, housing, financial assistance, legal services, and services to adolescents being the most frequently requested services. Many organizations reported that they have experienced a significant increase in the number of victims requesting services. Likewise, the categories of victims requesting services is changing. Increased requests for services for victims of trafficking/mail order brides, substance abuse treatment, services for men experiencing violent crime, mental health treatment, and services for victims with disabilities are some of the specific changes cited.

Organizations reported success in collaborative efforts and in achieving their goals for victim service programs as some of the major successes of the last two years. One organization initiated a "Family Court Project" to bring together stakeholders to work on the Probate court issues, leading to the creation of the Probate and Family Court Subcommittee of the Governor's Commission. This organization has also joined Jane Doe's committee on this issue and is collaborating with legal service programs to look at ways to meet the legal needs of those clients who do not qualify financially for these programs. Financial constraints and the need to increase linguistic capacity were cited as the primary challenges. In considering challenges, one respondent insightfully added that, “The primary challenges initiated efforts that resulted in some of the primary successes.”

**Table 2.1**



**Table 2.2**



### *Section 3: Community Collaboration & Outreach Efforts*

The majority of respondents felt that their outreach efforts publicizing their services to victims of crime were effective (39% -- “Very Effective,” 55% -- “Somewhat Effective”). Respondents were asked what they thought could be done to improve their outreach efforts. They were also asked if MOVA could provide support and/or help in improving their outreach efforts; and, if so, how? Marketing, research, training, collaboration, and outreach materials were cited as the main efforts/tools that could be used to improve outreach. Organizations responded enthusiastically regarding what MOVA could do to support and encourage outreach. The primary suggestion was for MOVA to facilitate state-wide victim services awareness campaigns using the media and key contacts throughout the Commonwealth. One organization suggested that an awareness campaign specifically focus on courts, law enforcement, and community organizations. Another respondent suggested that MOVA “do a feature story in one of their publications on homicide bereavement services available in the state.” Other suggestions for support from MOVA included:

- allowing organizations to designate more staff hours to research, marketing, and outreach
- MOVA staff attending more events and having more of a presence in the community
- using the VOCA Listserv to impart information and to connect providers with communities
- continued training for both victim service providers and other service providers (i.e. law enforcement, DSS, other agencies)
- printing a SAFEPLAN brochure in Russian.

Some of the obstacles that impede organizations from more successfully assisting victims of crime in their catchment areas were cited as: financial obstacles, lack of multilingual services (particularly multilingual therapists), lack of transportation, lack of sensitivity in some law enforcement agencies, lack of affordable housing, lack of affordable legal services, increasing demand for services, lack of public awareness of services, fragmentation of services, lack of staff, low salaries, lack of health insurance, lack of awareness and services for GLBT populations regarding domestic violence, long waiting lists, lack of therapists trained in trauma work, lack of support groups, lack of childcare, difficulty identifying victims, and difficulty maneuvering through the legal process.

When asked how service providers, law enforcement agencies, and the court system could better collaborate to serve crime victims in their service areas, respondents provided a large number of specific suggestions. Roundtables, joint training, and increased levels of referrals comprised the majority of suggestions. Also suggested were: educational forums where victims speak with providers about what works and what does not work regarding current service provision, Victim Witness Advocates and domestic violence programs fostering closer partnerships, community-based justice meetings where individuals explore ways to restore harm caused by crime and conflict through restorative justice programs, cross-training and sensitivity-training for law enforcement agencies, more Victim Witness Advocates, better collaboration with police departments, more education of district and probate court judges on the dynamics of domestic violence, increased cultural competency, more accountability for police chiefs, and better case review practices.

#### ***Section 4: Budgeting and Finance***

Respondents were asked to provide a variety of information regarding budgeting and finance. Although federal regulations restrict many indirect costs as allowable expenses, rising administrative costs were cited as the most difficult aspect of managing the VOCA budget by organizations receiving VOCA funding. Staff costs and maintaining competitive salaries was another of the most frequently cited difficulties. The majority of respondents felt that receiving level funding instead of increased funding during the next grant cycle would affect their VOCA-funded program (16% -- “Extreme Effect,” 79% -- “Some Effect”). When asked to comment on what some of the specific effects might be, a large majority of respondents cited staff-related costs (competitive salaries, mileage, fringe benefits), and many stated that the lack of funding for staff costs was affecting the quality of services offered by their organization. In addition, many respondents stated that they would not be able to expand services to cover current areas of need and/or to tackle waiting lists. The rising price of oil and administrative expenses were listed as specific concerns.

In order to determine their preference in the way future funding is distributed, respondents were asked whether they would prefer to receive level funding or a smaller initial amount of funding in the first year of the grant cycle, followed by slight Cost of Living Allowance (COLA) increases in the renewal years. 100% of respondents preferred to receive level funding.

Respondents made a variety of recommendations for MOVA to consider if faced with a decrease in funding. Some of those recommendations include:

- Decrease replication of services; encourage complementary funding.
- Support smaller programs that have the hardest time absorbing budget cuts.
- Support agencies that have a proven record of quality care, commitment, and best practice methodologies.
- Limit the number of smaller agencies and concentrate on agencies which provide multiple services.
- Support agencies that serve the most immediate needs of the clients.
- Prioritize services for poor and disenfranchised individuals and communities.
- Encourage cross agency collaboration.
- Support more direct services/direct service workers in lieu of administrative and supervisory personnel costs.
- Make sure services are being provided throughout state and not concentrated in one county.
- Support programs providing a unique service not available through other sources.
- Base funding on the statistical need for each area served.
- Ensure that funding fills the gaps in services which are not adequately funded by other State funding sources.
- Fund all current programs that apply for renewed funding while sharing the funding reduction equally among all programs.

Respondents were also asked to make recommendations for agency-based priorities should expansion be an option. Some of their responses include:

- Individual counseling
- Support groups
- Linguistic capabilities

- Services to male victims
- Youth services
- Children's services
- Services to trafficking victims
- Case management/advocacy
- Outreach services
- Staff training and compensation
- Services to immigrants
- Substance abuse and mental health services
- Emergency response services

### ***Section 5: Victim Populations***

This section of the survey yielded, by far, the most wealth in the responses, as organizations explained the general trends in service utilization amongst victim populations. Respondents confirmed that the four main areas of service provision highlighted during the current grant are still relevant: Advocacy Services for Victims with Multiple Needs, Comprehensive Services to Child and Teen Victims, Services to Victims with Disabilities, and Victims with Limited or No Access to Services. Organizations then went on to outline specific achievements or identified gaps regarding each of the above areas of need. The achievements were both creative and significant in scope. One example is of an organization who offers an after school art therapy group for young victims. In order to accommodate hearing disabled children, a person proficient in American Sign Language (ASL) was hired. Some of the gaps include lack of: affordable housing, legal services, transportation, funding to meet client demand, Spanish-speaking therapists trained in specific areas of service provision, services for deaf/blind clients, relocation services, referrals from police.

Respondents highlighted a wealth of emerging trends and areas of need to better serve victims. The following are some of the most frequently cited areas of need:

- Affordable legal aid
- Services for immigrants and refugee victims (domestic violence, in particular)
- Services for victims of hate crime
- Services for victims of trafficking and/or sexual exploitation
- Services for disenfranchised new immigrants/refugees
- Services for non-English speakers
- Services for the GLBT community
- Services for victims who witness crime
- Services for domestic violence victims with substance abuse/mental health issues
- Juvenile Court Advocates
- Sexual abuse evaluation
- Support for Caretakers/Parents of Abused Children
- Holistic models of service
- Counseling (individual, group, and family; children and teens; Spanish-speaking)
- Direct financial assistance for food and transportation
- Childcare
- Urgent care services, such as crisis intervention & stabilization
- Better response from the courts

Other areas of need identified that are beyond the scope of VOCA included prevention programs, medical services for children, dental care, housing, and employment training programs for teens.

The following are the most frequently cited emerging trends. Providers reported seeing an increase in the following:

- prostitution
- homelessness
- unemployment
- trafficking
- immigration/populations with language barriers
- bullying
- domestic violence
- substance abuse
- poverty
- gang activity
- cost of services
- need for services for children who have experienced and/or witnessed domestic violence
- number of teens on the street who are very vulnerable to crime
- medical costs/decreasing public funds to cover those costs
- requests for relocation services
- need for SANE funding for pediatric exams
- need for collaboration

Other emerging trends included:

- Budget cuts in grants for victim of crime services
- Decreasing compassion/interest from general public
- Changes in welfare/medical assistance
- Continued link of substance abuse and mental illness
- Continued lack of consistency in response and reporting among law enforcement
- Continued lack of consistency in responses from judges on 209A cases and issuance of permanent restraining orders

Respondents provided many concrete suggestions for how MOVA could assist their organizations in addressing service gaps and best providing services to crime victims. Some of the suggestions included:

- Money
- Training
- Partnerships/collaboration
- State and federal advocacy
- Training for judges and court personnel
- Ability to access bilingual therapists
- Public awareness of poverty and its impact
- Public awareness around multiple needs of victims (i.e. victims of violent crimes are also susceptible to other issues—substance abuse, immigration concerns, mental illness).
- Information sharing amongst VOCA-funded agencies
- Publicity and outreach
- Fund increased advocacy

Respondents were given the opportunity to provide general information to MOVA in light of the upcoming open-bid process. Responses ranged from making suggestions on how to distribute funding to requests to hold the Bidders' Conference in multiple areas throughout the state. Some of the responses included:

- “Most clients have multiple needs, so that very few people can be classified in one category and the process of treatment is lengthy and complicated.”
- “VOCA funding continues to be an increasingly essential source of support for victim services, particularly for victim services to the economically disenfranchised victims who may lack other resources, to individuals and communities traumatized by acts of extreme violence, and to individuals from immigrant and linguistic communities who may face particular barriers to accessing service.”
- “Please be gentle as you design the RFR and make it “user-friendly!” If only DSS, DPH and MOVA/VOCA could adopt the same format!”
- “I think we are about to enter a period where SANEs and CAC programs are going to be even more visible and therefore will require even more support if they are to be successful.”

### **Summary**

Many of the respondents indicated that the Needs Assessment survey was a helpful tool in communicating the needs of their organizations to MOVA. Responses included:

- “I appreciate MOVA doing the survey. This was a great opportunity for funders and providers to meet halfway. For once, it is not just about funders and providers ‘butting heads,’ but actually doing things together for the betterment of serving people.”
- “We have appreciated the ability to consult with MOVA in addressing the specific issues of our agency. Also, serving as a coordinator of victim services and link to other agencies in the Commonwealth has been invaluable.”
- “Your open communication makes this kind of communication possible.”
- “Recent trainings on a regional level have been helpful.”
- “It has been our experience that MOVA has been direct, supportive and responsive to our questions and concerns. They have provided technical support when needed; are organized and consistent with site visits and have helped to identify other providers who could assist. . .”
- “Great survey—user friendly, allowed us to talk about the needs [of the organization]”
- “. . . has always appreciated the support MOVA has shown our program.”
- “. . . we currently feel this survey addresses most areas adequately.”
- “The needs assessment is a great first step.”

The information gathered by the survey clearly indicated that VOCA funding is enabling organizations to provide critical services for a growing population of victims and survivors of crime. The results from the survey also revealed that growing needs for both general and specialized victim services is taxing an already stretched sector. MOVA's provision of funding was deemed essential and positive suggestions were made for ways in which MOVA could provide additional practical support to victim service providers throughout the Commonwealth.

## *Victim Responses*

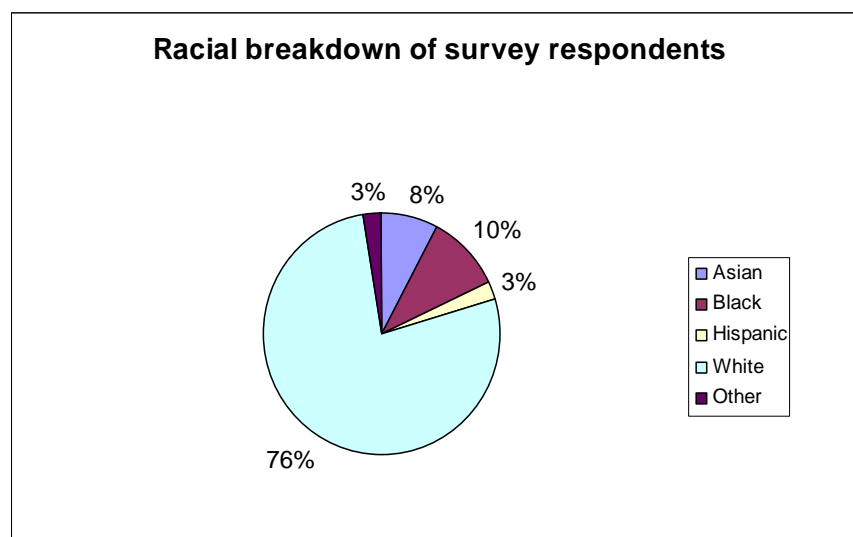
### **Findings**

The survey elicited information directly from victims regarding the needs and benefits associated with VOCA funding. Despite the limited number of victim survey respondents compared to the number of victims state-wide, the survey findings provide definitive information regarding the needs of victims and their experiences with victim service providers. As MOVA continues to strive to provide the highest level of services to victims, this information provides valuable insight into how best to prioritize responses to their stated needs. The respondents of the survey are victims of crime and/or their significant others. A total of 48 respondents participated in the survey.

### ***Section 1: Demographic Information***

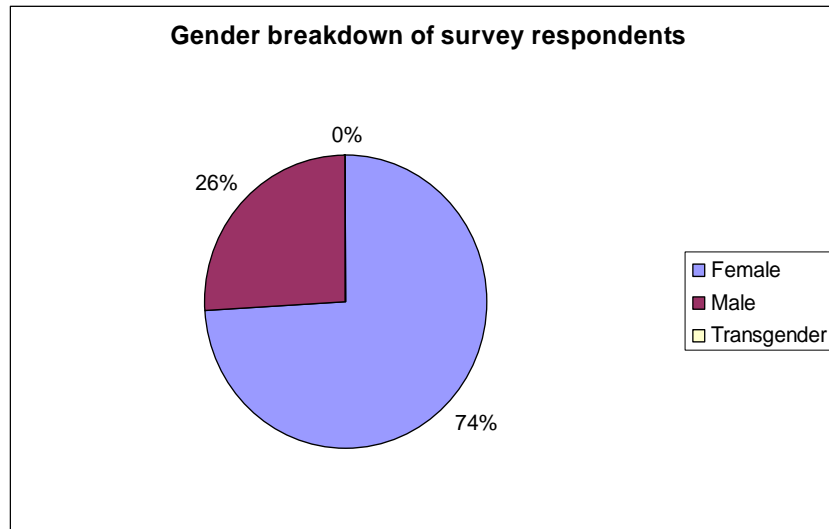
Respondents to the survey were diverse, representing varying age groups, ethnic and racial backgrounds, sexual orientation, and gender. Although the majority of respondents were white, a range of other races and ethnicities were represented including “South Asian Indian” and “Cape Verdean.” The majority of respondents were women; however, over a quarter of the respondents were both heterosexual and homosexual men. The current age of respondents ranged from 13 to 61, with 52% being between the ages of 36 and 59. There was a similarly wide range in the ages of victims (either the respondents or significant other) at the time of the crime, with ages ranging from 18 months to 72 years old. The full breakdown of victim age at the time of crime is as follows: 0-5: **15%**, 6-12: **12%**, 13-18: **9%**, 19-35: **30%**, 36-59: **27%**, 60-74: **6%**. Respondents live throughout the Commonwealth in Hampden, Essex, Middlesex, Suffolk, Plymouth, Norfolk, Barnstable, Bristol, Berkshire, Hampshire counties. The majority of respondents reside in Middlesex and Suffolk counties. The following set of graphs detail demographic information about the respondents.

**Table 3.1**

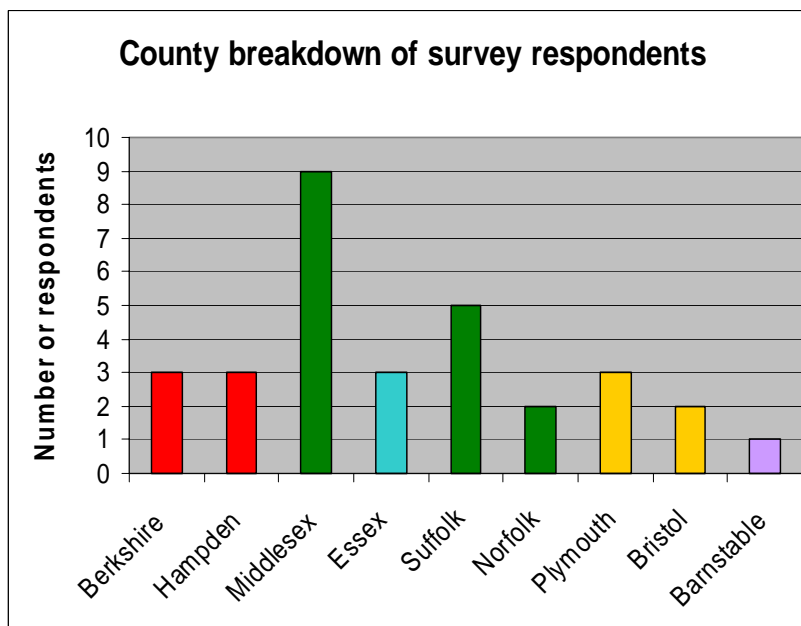




**Table 3.2**



**Table 3.3**

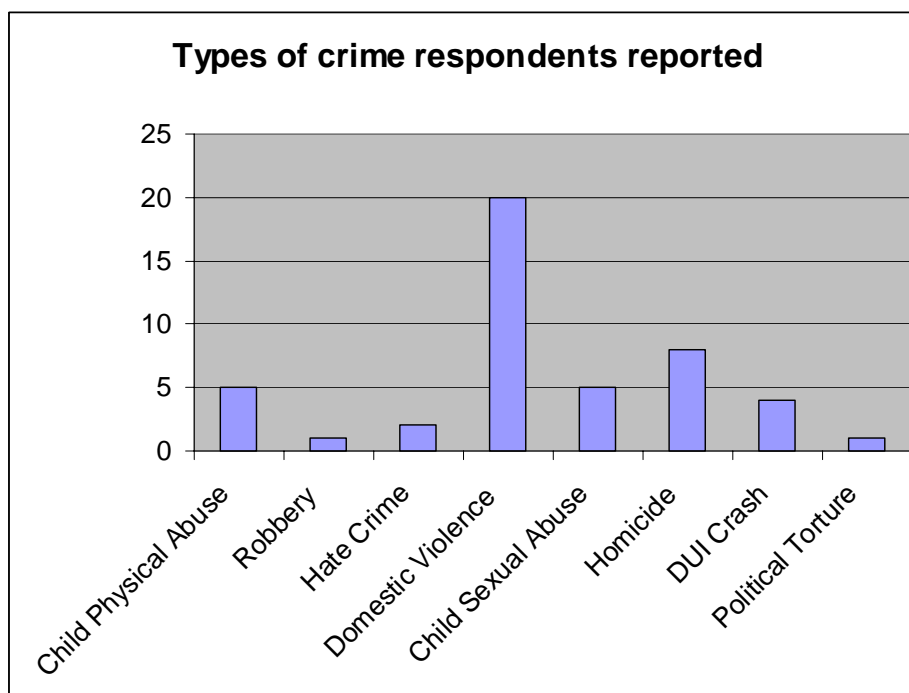


The graph is broken down into specific regions which are indicated by color: Western, Eastern, North Shore, South Shore, and Cape Islands). None of the respondents who identified themselves were located in Hampshire, Franklin, Worcester, Dukes, or Nantucket Counties.

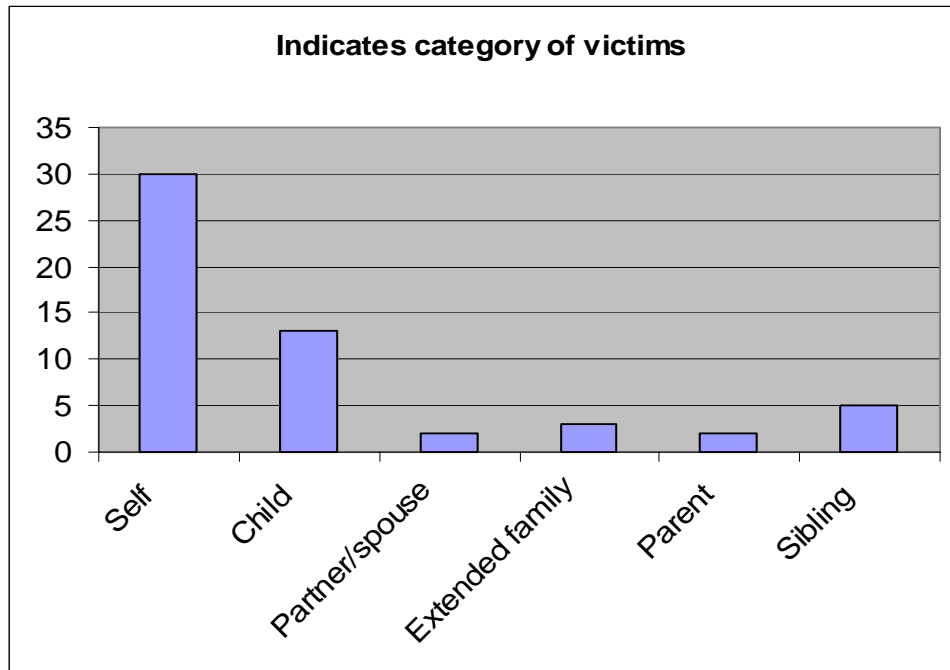
## Section 2: Crime-Related Information

Information provided by the respondents revealed that their experiences of crime were diverse. Of the types of crime reported by respondents, domestic violence was the most frequently reported, followed by homicide and assault/sexual assault. Of 48 respondents, one indicated a crime involving the abuse of a disabled person and four indicated a crime involving the abuse of an elder. The majority of crimes occurred to respondents or their children. Other categories of crime victims are outlined in the graphs below; however, several respondents specified the nature of their relationship with the victim, namely grandchildren, great-grandchildren, and nieces. None of the victims of crime were identified as community members, grandparents, or friends. Although some crimes had occurred as recently as within the last month, the majority of crimes took place more than two years ago. The majority of respondents sought help following an experience of crime either “immediately” or within one to six days, although 6% waited “more than a year” before seeking help. Out of 48 respondents, 85% reported crime occurred less than 10 miles away from where they lived at the time of a incident while only 15% claim that incidents occurred more than 10 miles away. The counties where the crimes took place include: Hampshire, Suffolk, Plymouth, Middlesex, Norfolk, Worcester, Essex, Bristol, Berkshire, and Hampden. The majority of crimes took place in Middlesex and Suffolk. In addition to crimes occurring in Massachusetts, incidents of crime also took place in North Carolina, New Jersey, Rhode Island, Illinois, and Puerto Rico. The following tables provide details regarding the crimes affecting the respondents.

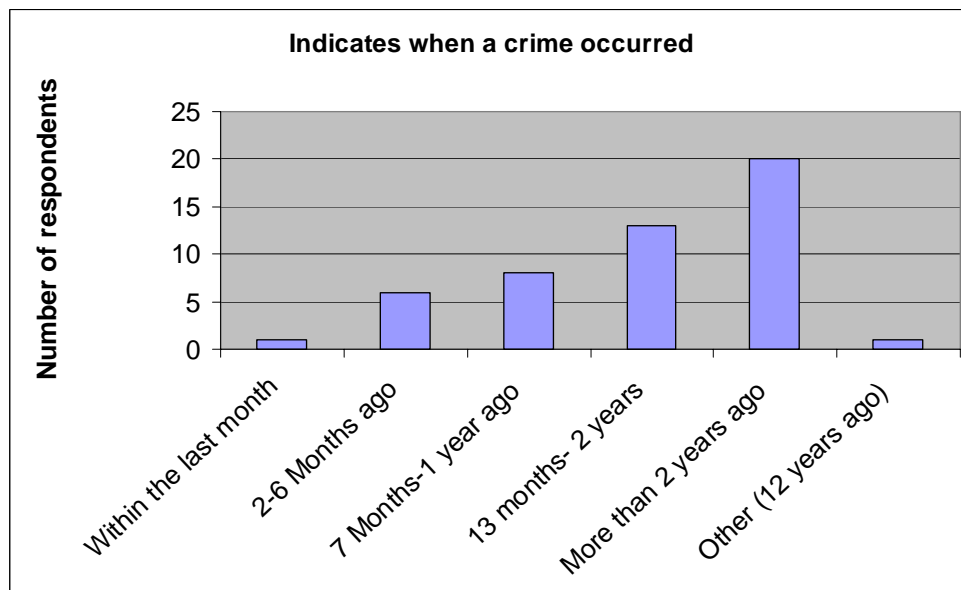
**Table 4.1:**



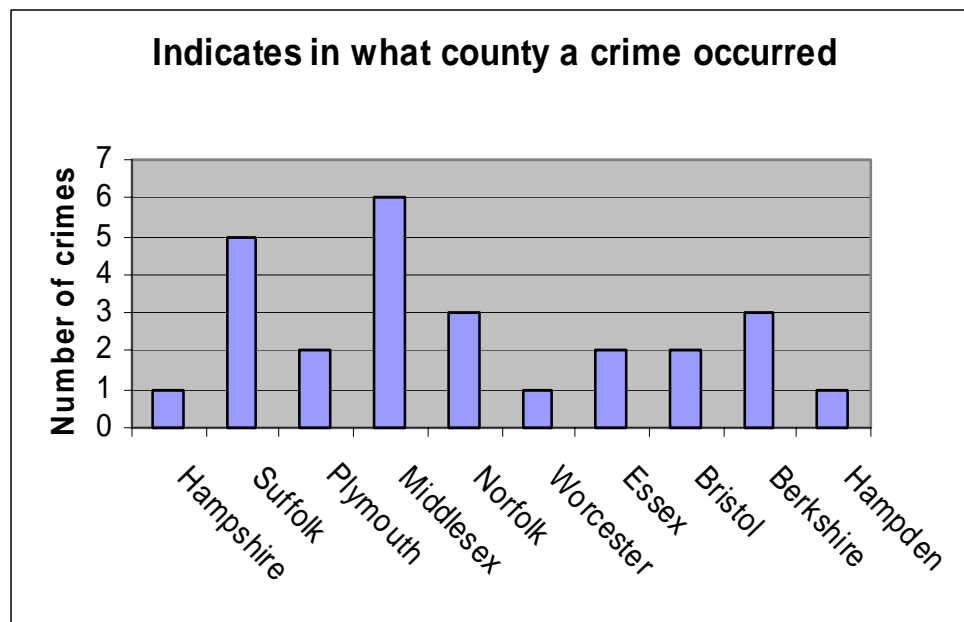
**Table 4.2:**



**Table 4.3**



**Table 4.4**



### ***Section 3: Service Utilization***

Respondents indicated that they have utilized multiple services during the time following their experience of crime. Sixty-one percent sought help either immediately or within one to six days following the crime. The specific services sought are outlined in the following graphs; however, other services mentioned include: Victim Witness Advocates, social workers, the Department of Social Services, coworkers, the Department of Transitional Assistance, and advocacy agencies for victims of drunk driving. Among the services accessed, the most frequently accessed were mental health agencies, District Attorneys/Victim Witness Advocates, and law enforcement/criminal justice organizations. Other organizations accessed were bereavement centers, advocacy agencies for victims of drunk driving, domestic violence provider/shelters, victim advocacy programs, personal physicians, independent therapists, the Department of Transitional Assistance, and shelter/housing. There were a variety of services received from these organizations with “Therapy” and “Crisis Counseling” being cited as the most utilized. Other utilized services included food stamps, advocacy, and a confidential hotline for gay men in abusive relationships.

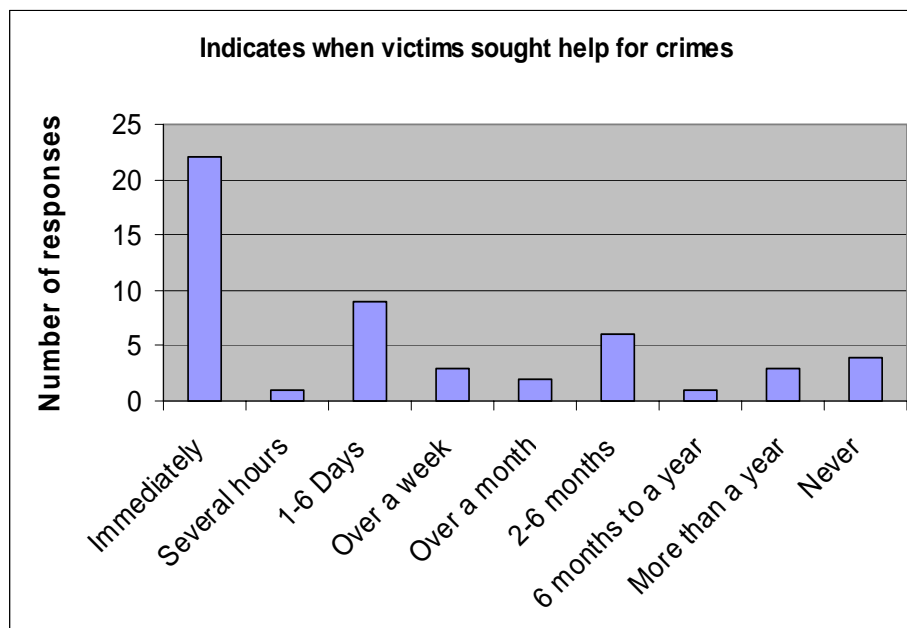
The vast majority of participants reported being helped by the services received. Specific comments regarding the way in which services helped include:

- Feeling understood
- Support of other homicide survivors
- Providing therapy that helped with addressing family and past history issues
- “If these services were not in effect, my family and I would not be here today.”

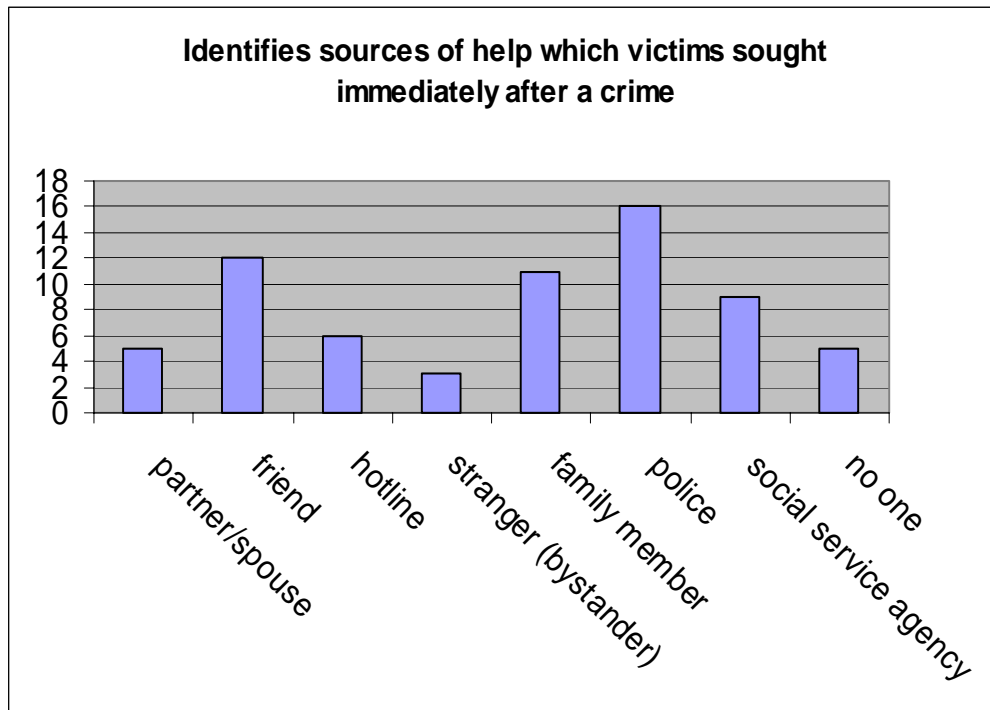
- “Took us out of dangerous situation, empowered us by helping us receive services and get business together, self-esteem.”
- “I was in a very bad position, nowhere to go and no help. Thanks to the staff, my life is back in order.”
- “I was happy to have someone to talk to and not involve my family.”
- “I’m not alone—learning that helped greatly.”
- “I was able to keep my family together, thanks to the staff.”
- “Coping strategies, helpful legal information was provided and overall guidance for the upcoming months/years to deal with this crisis.”
- “I became independent.”

The following tables provide information regarding service utilization.

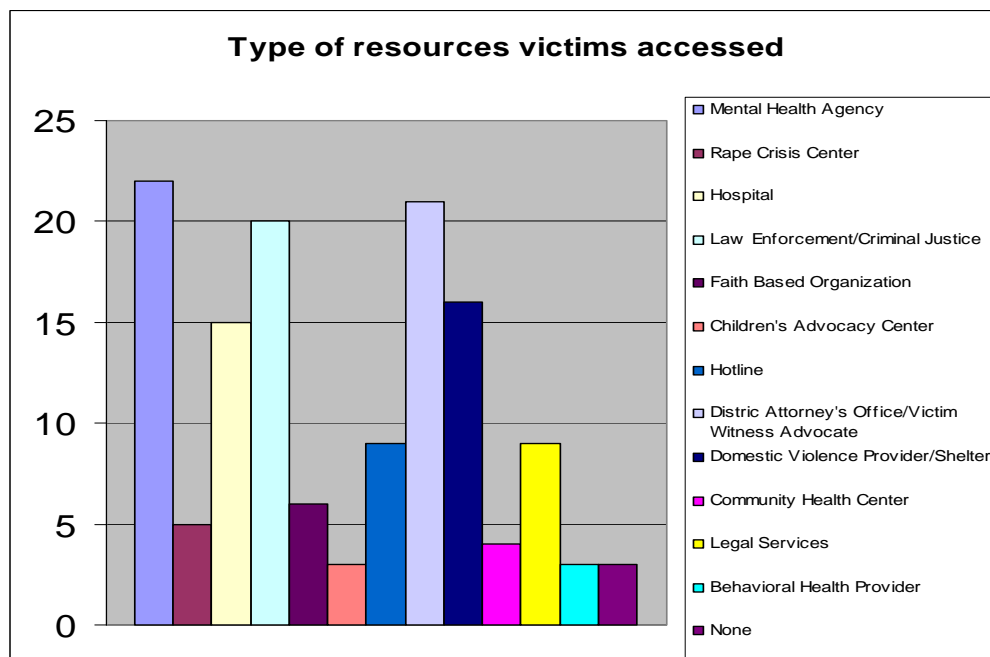
**Table 5.1**



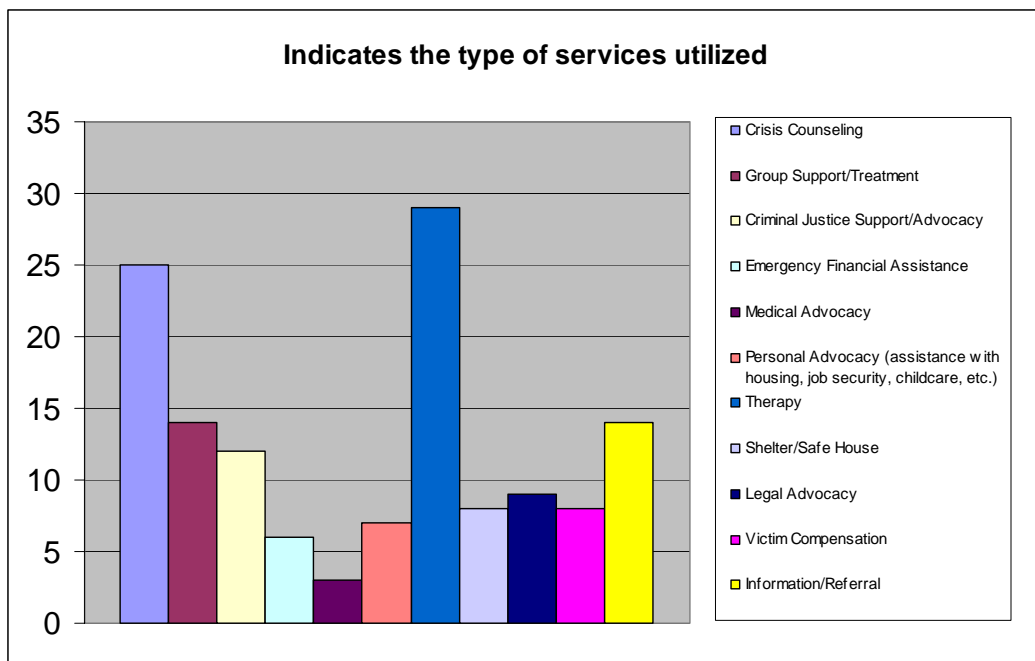
**Table 5.2**



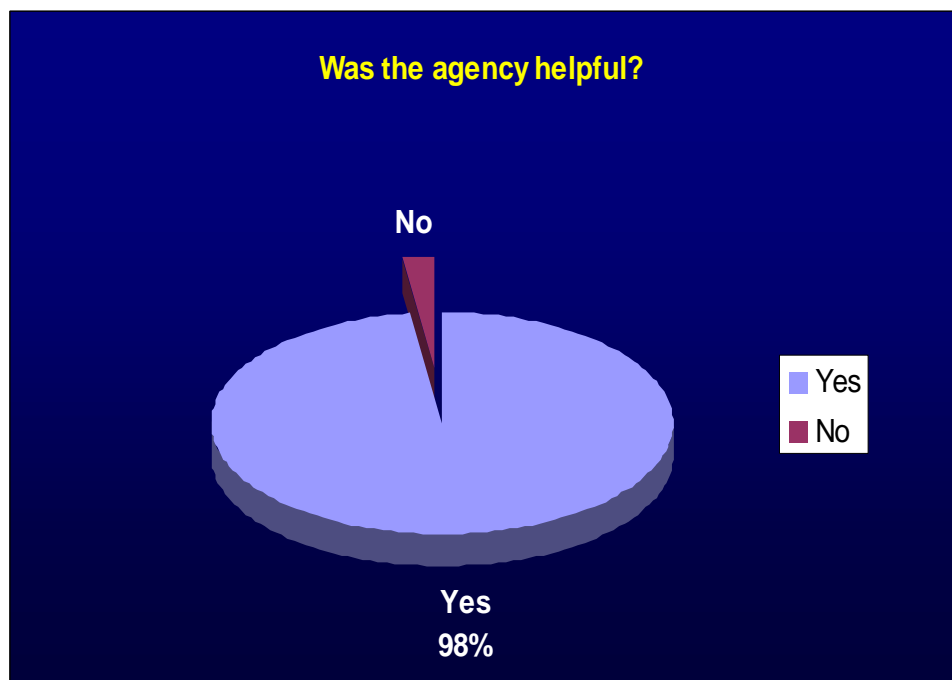
**Table 5.3**



**Table 5.4**



**Table 5.5**



#### ***Section 4: Service Delivery***

Although VOCA-funded services have been essential to the respondents of this survey, ongoing and continuing needs remain for victim services. Out of 48 survey respondents, 44 answered the question related to how accessible victim services were. 46% reported services as very convenient, 32% as convenient, 20% as somewhat convenient, and 2% reported services not being convenient at all. More specifically, when asked the reasons for not utilizing services, respondents expressed the following comments and critiques:

- “I tried.”
- “No success.”
- “No one returned phone call.”
- “No services for a gay man.”
- “I thought I could take care of it myself.”
- “Victim compensation took too long.”
- “I struggled to get legal help. Transportation was also expensive and difficult when I was homeless to get from appointment to appointment.”
- “Having to go multiple places to access various services when there should be a place with comprehensive services.”

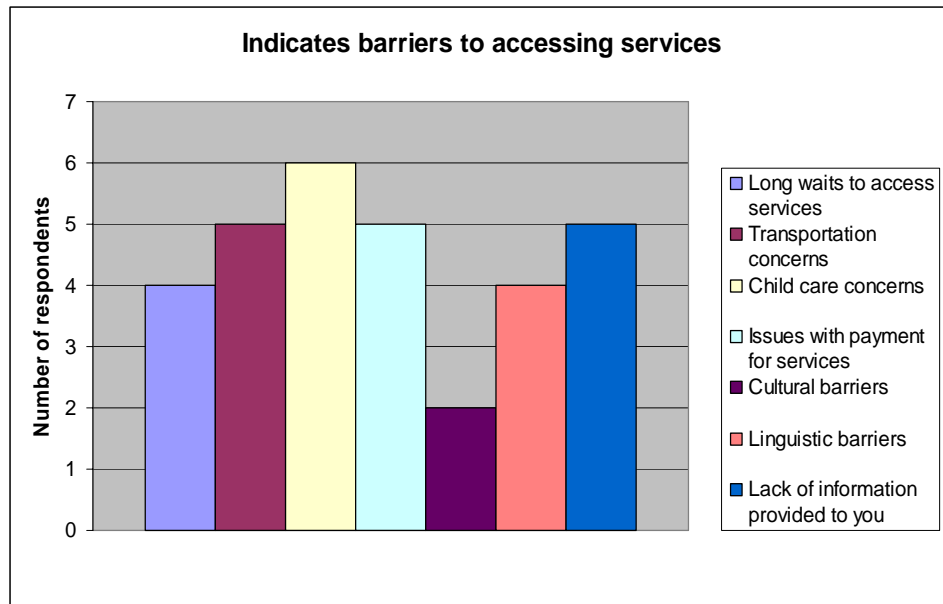
The majority of respondents felt that agencies collaborated effectively in meeting their needs. Specific comments about victims’ perception of agency collaboration are as follows:

- “Advocate accompanied me to DSS and helped set a meeting to meet with a DV specialist who helped me understand what they could do for me and my children.”
- “Registry and Criminal Court should know what each entity is doing in drunk driving cases.”
- “All agencies worked together to share information for the clients benefits and to take care of other needs.”
- “Always making sure me and my children had the right people and paperwork, phone numbers, etc.”
- “When the domestic violence programs denied shelter, they did not try to locate other housing options.”
- “Legal services were hard to coordinate with out of state agencies.”
- “The hotline was helpful, but not with shelter. Unable to get housing when I needed it.”

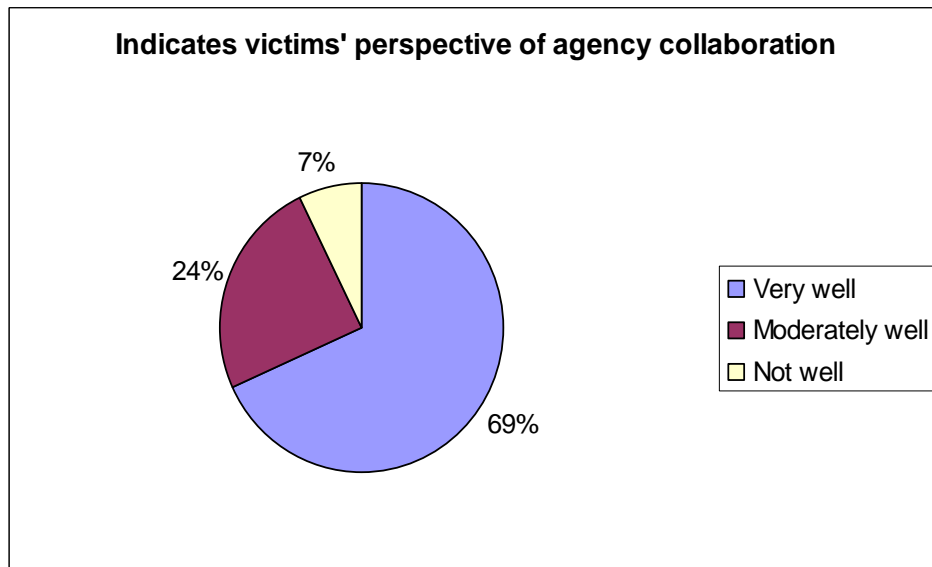
The following tables provide details regarding service utilization.



**Table 6.1**



**Table 6.2**



## ***Section 5: Victim Involvement***

When asked what suggestions they have for improving victim services, respondents revealed:

- “Better financial assistance and information regarding legal process.”
- “I understand that victim advocates handle many types of problems, but I think the fact that ‘a problem that is small to one victim is huge to another’ needs to be reinforced.”
- “Make the police take the complaint—politely. Have a follow up crisis team follow the victim close by for weeks through the court process—get some real help to keep the person safe. Have an organized, appropriate medical/forensic approach to the diagnosis of incest that will generate substantial evidence. Create a means of review for inappropriate Guardian Ad Litem behavior and make their records public.”
- “Financial assistance for transportation, basic necessities at shelter, better communication with agency.”
- “. . . more funding needed to assist victims, especially children.”
- “The language barrier made things very difficult for me to access by myself. I think a lot of people would not come to reach services due to the language barriers. If there are always translators for many languages in every agency, and people who would understand different cultures, many more immigrants would come forward to reach services.”
- “Services targeting gay victims should be available.”
- “More advertising, school outreach program, fundraisers to help contribute money, open more centers.”
- “Maybe more home type visits for women with young children.”
- “Programs serving those who are grieving due to homicide cases are right on track.”
- “Built in child care, knowing that the kids are safe so that we can work, shop, etc.”
- “Transportation services would help for people like me to get to places for services.”
- “Services for everyone regardless of gender. More anonymous disclosure from DA’s offices.”
- “Add more staff.”
- “Having more people that speak other languages. Is hard to get resources where there are bilingual people.”
- “Additional funding for their services is needed. Transportation services.”
- “More agencies.”
- More home visit for women with young children.

### **Summary**

The significant input from victims confirmed the importance of maintaining quality service provision for victims of crime throughout the Commonwealth. The results from the survey revealed that continued access to services is vital, as many victims utilize services both immediately and for years following their incident of crime. Likewise, developing and maintaining a diverse range of service provision is an essential component of meeting the needs of victims, as the responses from the survey show that victims are accessing a multitude of services from those that meet practical needs to therapeutic intervention. The emotional support of victim service provision cannot be underestimated. Many respondents conveyed how important the support of various organizations was in empowering them to move forward following their experience of crime. Despite the fact that respondents confirmed the effectiveness of victim service provision, they also conveyed a variety of needs that are not being met. It is of critical importance that victim service providers continue to work together to ensure that these gaps in services are being addressed.

## *Comparison of Findings from Survey and Listening & Learning Tour*

In preparing for their respective open bid processes, DSS and MOVA collaborated in their processes to assess victim and victim service provider needs throughout the Commonwealth. While MOVA's Needs Assessment was carried out via the surveys whose findings are addressed in this report, DSS's Listening and Learning Tour, focusing specifically on domestic violence and sexual assault services, involved program observations, focus groups, surveys of recipients of WIC, and two day-long Reflection and Planning Days. Both processes resulted in a significant amount of data, much of which revealed commonalities in the responses of participants. The key areas of commonality are briefly outlined below.

Both victims and victim service providers identified a multitude of services that are needed and are not currently being adequately provided. These services include:

- Mental health services
  - Many respondents stated that mental health services are also needed in conjunction with substance abuse treatment, particularly for victims of domestic violence.
- Transportation
  - Although transportation is an issue affecting people throughout the Commonwealth, the lack of public transportation in rural areas is leaving many individuals and families particularly isolated.
- Childcare
  - Respondents stated that a lack of childcare prevents many women from accessing needed services.
- Culturally/linguistically competent services
  - Services that are sensitive to varying cultures are needed.
  - Improved understanding by providers of cultural norms as they relate to types of victimization are needed.
  - Respondents affirmed the need for services to be offered in other languages by multi-lingual staff members.
  - A particular need for multi-lingual counselors/therapists was stated.
  - A need for agency materials offered in other languages was expressed.
  - Staff members trained in American Sign Language are needed.
- Legal services
  - More advocates are needed to help individuals through the court process.
  - Many respondents stated a need for greater understanding of victim issues by judges, probate court staff, and local police departments.
  - More support for victims from judges and probate court staff members is needed.
  - More support for victims from local police departments is needed.
  - Training for police and court staff about victim issues is needed.
- Housing
  - Affordable, long-term housing is needed.
- Financial assistance
  - Many respondents reported a need for practical financial assistance in the wake of emergency relocation.
  - Financial planning services would allow victims to regain financial stability following incidents of victimization.

- Funding
  - Many victim service providers are experiencing an increased demand for their services, but do not have the funding to enable them to expand services.
- Support groups
  - Groups have been stated by respondents as a particularly helpful way of coping with victimization.
- Holistic/spiritual/faith-based services
  - Some respondents reported a growing need for service provision that integrates physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual ways of addressing client need.
- Services for victims with disabilities
  - Improved services for this population are needed.
- Services for victims of elder abuse
  - Improved services for this population are needed.
- Services for victims that identify as GLBT
  - Domestic violence services and shelter for men is an increasing need.
  - Respondents reported a lack of knowledge regarding GLBT victimization from victim service providers.
- Services for immigrants and refugees
  - Language barriers continue to be a challenge in serving this population.
  - Many victims that are immigrants/refugees are unaware that they qualify for services despite a lack of documentation.
- Support services for non-offending parents/guardians
  - Counseling/therapy and support groups were suggestions for particular services for this population.
- Children/Adolescents
  - Counseling/therapy and support groups were strong areas of need for this population.
  - Trauma-specific services are needed for this population.
  - Services designed for children/adolescents who have witnessed domestic violence or other types of violent crime are needed.
- Advocacy
  - Improved advocacy services for victims are needed.
- Central informational clearinghouse
  - Many victim service providers stated that it would be helpful to have a central source that they could turn to for information and networking.
- Staff compensation
  - Many victim service providers stated that it was difficult to attract and retain skilled staff because they cannot offer competitive pay and/or raises.
  - Money for staff-related costs is also lacking, and makes it difficult for providers to offer training and health-related benefits.
  - It is difficult for providers to hire enough staff to cover existing need and to address known needs in the community.

A concern expressed by victim service providers is that there is limited understanding, support, and/or involvement from the local communities regarding the services they provide to victims.

Many victim service providers emphasized the benefits of collaboration, stating that work with other victim service providers and with community coalitions has resulted in stronger service provision.

## *Conclusion*

It is the continued courage of victims and the willingness of victim service providers to go “above and beyond” their already-full schedules that made this Needs Assessment possible. MOVA thanks all those who took the time to complete surveys and to lend their valuable insights to the needs analysis process. These findings confirm areas of need that still exist, as well as present new challenges for the sector to address through the FY2007 open bid process. The needs presented will be considered as the open-bid process unfolds. It is MOVA’s hope that by hearing the voices of victims and providers, we can partner more effectively to ensure that essential victim service provision continues throughout the Commonwealth.